

Message Text

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PAGE 01 AMMAN 04080 061501Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05 AID-05 SSM-03
CA-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SY-05 MCT-01 A-01 OPR-02
USSS-00 OC-06 CCO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 /104 W
-----036176 061513Z /42

O R 061329Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0000
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
USUN MISSION GENEVA 831

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 4080

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: UNRWA, LE, AV, JO
SUBJECT: UNRWA TO MOVE HEADQUARTERS FROM LEBANON

REF: BEIRUT 2498

1. WHILE WE UNDERSTAND COMMISSIONER GENERAL MCELHWNEY'S
DESIRE FOR REASONS OF SECURITY, OPERATIONS AND STAFF MORALE
TO MOVE UNRWA HEADQUARTERS FROM BEIRUT, WE ARE DIS-
TURBED AT POSSIBLY IMPENDING DECISION TO MOVE TO
VIENNA, WHICH A VARIETY OF LOCAL SOURCES ARE REPORTING.
WE STRONGLY BELIEVE UNRWA HEADQUARTERS SHOULD REMAIN IN
AREA OF ITS OPERATIONS AND SHOULD NOT MOVE TO EUROPE.

2. WE BELIEVE THERE ARE SOUND POLITICAL REASONS FOR
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MAINTAINING UNRWA IN THE AREA: (1) UNRWA HEADQUARTERS IS
AN OPERATIONAL ORGANIZATION WHICH SHOULD NOT SEPARATE
ITSELF FROM CLOSE CONTACT WITH ITS GEOGRAPHICAL AREA OR
ITS FIVE FIELD OFFICES, (2) A MOVE OUT OF THE MIDDLE EAST
MAY WELL BE SEEN BY ARABS AS PARTLY A DISASSOCIATION FROM
THE REFUGEE PROBLEM AND RELATED TO ITS PROSPECTIVE CUTS IN
SERVICES (WHICH MANY BELIEVE HAVE POLITICAL OVERTONES);

(3) IT WILL CERTAINLY CUT ACCESS BY HOST COUNTRIES TO UNRWA'S LEADERSHIP; (4) IT MAY MAKE IT PSYCHOLOGICALLY MORE DIFFICULT TO PURSUE CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNRWA FROM THE OIL-RICH ARAB NATIONS IN THAT IT TENDS TO MAKE UNRWA MORE OF A "WESTERN" ORGANIZATION AT A TIME WHEN IT IS MOST IN NEED OF ARAB FINANCIAL AND OTHER SUPPORT, (5) FINALLY, WE THINK THE IMAGE OF A MOVE TO VIENNA FOR THE ORGANIZATION'S HIGHLY-PAID INTERNATIONAL STAFF AT A TIME WHEN IT IS PLANNING TO CUT REFUGEE RATIONS IS PARTICULARLY BAD; IT IS EQUALLY SO AT TIME WHEN UTLQONGRESS HAS JUST HAD STAFF REVIEW IN THE FIELD OF UNRWA'S PERFORMANCE AND PROSPECTS.

3. WE UNDERSTAND THAT UNRWA WOULD HAVE QUARTERS PROVIDED TO IT AT UN FACILITIES IN VIENNA, AND THAT COSTS OF OPERATING IN VIENNA MAY BE SIMILAR AND PERHAPS SOMEWHAT LESS THAN THOSE IN MIDDLE EAST. THERE MAY ALSO BE OTHER ECONOMIC FACTORS TO MOVE OF WHICH WE NOT AWARE; HOWEVER, WE DOUBT THAT THEY OUTWIEGH POLITICAL FACTORS INVOLVED AND MAY NOT ALL BE IN FAVOR OF VIENNA MOVE, PARTICULARLY SINCE UNRWA MOVED SOME OFFICES TO AMMAN IN 1976. AT LEAST WE BELIEVE THAT APPROACH SHOULD BE TRIED.

4. IN ANY CASE, AS THE MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO UNRWA WE BELIEVE ANY SUCH MOVE SHOULD BE CLOSELY COORDINATED WITH THE USG. WE UNDERSTAND THAT UNRWA HAD GIVEN SOME THOUGHT TO MOVING TO AMMAN; WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE WELCOME HERE,
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AND WOULD HAVE EASY ACCESS TO ALL ITS OPERATIONS FROM AMMAN. HOWEVER, ANY OTHER LOCATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST WOULD SEEM ACCEPTABLE, AND PREFERABLE TO A MOVE TO VIENNA. WE URGE DEPARTMENT AND USUN TO REVIEW UNRWA'S MOVE AND CONSULT WITH IT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, SINCE DECISION ON NEW LOCATION MAY BE IMMINENT.
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